



State of Wisconsin  
Governor Scott Walker

## Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Ben Brancel, Secretary

DATE: December 4, 2012

TO: Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

FROM: Ben Brancel, Secretary *Ben Brancel*  
Mike Powers, Administrator, Division of Agricultural Development *Mike Powers*

SUBJECT: **DATCP Grazing Program Report**

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Laura Paine, Grazing and Organic Agriculture Specialist  
Members of the Grow Wisconsin Grazing Initiative planning team

RECOMMENDATION / REQUESTED ACTION: Information only

### SUMMARY / BACKGROUND:

Laura Paine and colleagues will present a summary of a needs assessment and recommendations for supporting managed grazing education in Wisconsin. After more than 15 years, both state and federal grant funding for managed grazing education and technical assistance is disappearing. We assembled representatives of grazing organizations (GrassWorks, Inc. and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Steering Committee) as well as agency staff from UW Extension, NRCS, DATCP, and Wisconsin Technical Colleges to analyze grazing education and technical assistance capacity among agencies and non-profit organizations in Wisconsin. Technical assistance involves one-on-one on-farm assistance including development of grazing plans and assistance with planning fencing, watering and lane systems. Education usually involves a group setting and includes informal pasture walks as well as classroom training and for-credit classes.

We have identified the following basic needs for beginning and experienced farmers using managed grazing:

Category	Need	Technical Assistance providers	Education providers
Beginning graziers	Outreach and basic education		Grazing Networks, GrassWorks, Inc., UW Extension, WI Technical Colleges, UW CALS, grant funded
	Initial grazing planning	NRCS, LCD, Grant funded	
Existing graziers	Advanced education		Grazing Networks, GrassWorks, Inc., UW Extension, WI Technical Colleges, UW CALS, grant funded
	Upgrading grazing systems, updating grazing plans	NRCS, LCD, Grant funded	

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Agency representatives have committed to helping leverage existing resources in the following ways:

- NRCS: Administration will encourage more county staff to become trained in grazing planning and participate in other professional development activities related to grazing.
- UW Extension: County Extension committees identify expertise needed to fill county agriculture agent positions, but Extension administration can use our needs assessment results to encourage these committees to consider expertise in managed grazing as a criterion for new hires. Existing county extension staff will be encouraged to become trained in managed grazing and participate in other professional development activities related to grazing.
- Wisconsin Technical Colleges (WTCS): Statewide Technical College system administrators can incorporate training on managed grazing into the WTCS in-service trainings for staff. Agencies can work together to develop a curriculum that can be made available to Tech College instructors to use in their classes.
- Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers: Dick Cates and his team are interested in having more distance education sites around the state.

The following unmet needs were identified:

- Train the trainer: develop a formal structure to provide ongoing professional development for agency staff to become knowledgeable and comfortable with managed grazing. We currently have a program for training on basic grazing planning, but developing a broader understanding of grazing systems requires additional training and experience.
  - This need can probably be met through the above strategies.
- Provide support and education for existing and new graziers through the grazing network structure in partnership with agencies.
  - Assign one or preferably two local agency staff to act as liaisons to each grazing network.
  - Develop a system of Master Grazier mentor farmers to be available to provide one-on-one assistance to farmers in their area, including a stipend for their efforts.
- Provide funding for technical service providers where there are no agency staff available to fill this role.
  - Could be partially funded through EQIP cost-share dollars provided through a mechanism similar to nutrient management planning. We would need to work with existing Grazing Specialists and/or Certified Crop Advisors to ensure that there are enough contractors available to work with producers signed up for grazing planning cost share.
- Develop a clearinghouse structure to network and coordinate resources among agencies and organizations (GrassWorks may be the best organization to play this role).

The next step in the process was to identify areas where these needs are met by existing agency staff and where programming is currently provided by grant funded projects. Most of these areas will be losing support resources at the end of 2013 when state-provided GLCI funding ends. In addition, the group has developed maps illustrating the distribution of livestock and dairy farms and pasture acreages in the state to assess whether the existing resources are effectively focused on areas where concentrations of livestock and dairy farmers as well as pasture acreages are high. In addition to this analysis, the presenters will share the maps that we created, what we learned from them, and our analysis of what the next steps should be.